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Evaluation

Evaluation of UNDP assistance to conflict-affected countries
Executive summary

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I. Background and objectives

1. This evaluation of UNDP in conflict-affected countries was commissioned by the Evaluation Office of UNDP in response to a request from the Executive Board; it comprises an evaluation of all aspects of UNDP involvement in such countries. Conflict prevention and recovery is a core practice area for UNDP that has been approved by the Executive Board, and UNDP activities in conflict-affected countries constituted nearly 40 per cent of UNDP global expenditure in 2005.

2. Performance was assessed as the extent to which UNDP contributed to improving human security and addressed the structural conditions conducive to conflict so that a reoccurrence of armed conflict could be prevented. To do so, the evaluation recognized the need to situate UNDP efforts in the context of the changing character of conflicts around the world and the role of the international community in addressing the human security concerns in affected countries.

II. Scope and approach

3. This evaluation was designed to assess the performance of UNDP policies and operations in conflict-affected countries within the context of the broader international response and United Nations reform. As such, it emphasizes the role of UNDP in integrated United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions.

4. The evaluation covered the period 2000-2005 and involved: (a) intensive case studies in six countries, all of which were, or still are, under Security Council mandate: Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Guatemala, Sierra Leone and Tajikistan, supplemented with (b) a tailored results-oriented survey of some 23 countries that are recipients of assistance from the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery; and (c) stakeholder interviews, desk research and data collection.

5. The evaluation utilized both primary- and secondary-source data, including past thematic and outcome programme evaluations. In order to gain an independent perspective, national consultants were recruited in each of the case study countries, and, in addition to UNDP staff and programme staff, semi-structured interviews were conducted with government officials, civil society members, parliamentarians, international observers, United Nations mission and agency staff, bilateral and multilateral agency staff, national and international academics, members of the military, police, private businesspeople, journalists and other members of the media.

6. The evaluation was undertaken by a core team of three senior international consultants supported by national consultants in each country visited. The research and analysis for the study was supported by a team at the London School of Economics.

III. Key findings

7. In our six case-study countries, overt conflict continues only in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but in all cases there are low levels of human security, measured in terms of population displacement, human rights violations, crime rates, violence and discrimination against women, economic insecurity – especially joblessness – and vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters. In all case six studies, it is possible to identify common structural conditions that make conflict more likely to be violent. These include weak state institutions; low participation in decision-making; weak civil society institutions; inadequate institutions to ensure the rule of law; emergence of private armed groups, leading to erosion of the 'monopoly of legitimate violence'; an undiversified economy dependent on primary products and external markets; the availability of small arms and large numbers of unemployed young men; unequal gender relations; a decline in human development; and the spread of an illegal or illegitimate economy. These conditions are aggravated by the experience of conflict or by conflict in neighbouring states.

The role of the international community

8. The international community has contributed to a decline in the overall number of conflicts by helping to sustain peace agreements, often through the United Nations. It has stabilized conflicts mainly through a substantial international presence. But it has not adequately addressed the structural conditions conducive to conflict. Human security, therefore, remains precarious, and there is a risk that armed conflicts may recur if the international presence is reduced or withdrawn.

9. Weaknesses of the international role include: failure to provide sufficient protection to civilians; failure to establish legitimate political authority because the approach is top-down and there is a tendency to co-opt perpetrators of past atrocities as part of short-term stabilization; insufficient engagement with civil society; failure to prioritize development from the outset; failure to mainstream gender; insufficient attention to the regional dimensions of conflict; a 'heavy footprint', the creation of parallel structures and the undermining of national structures; and an excessive preoccupation with security. At times the legitimacy of the international community itself is challenged by association with the 'War on Terror' and violations committed by United Nations peacekeepers.

The role of UNDP

10. UNDP is an essential component of the international effort. It is uniquely positioned within the United Nations to address the structural conditions conducive to conflict

11. In conflict-affected countries, UNDP undertakes a wide range of activities that are specific to each situation. Broadly speaking, they are aimed at the recovery and reintegration of war-affected populations; the restoration of state authority and governance capacity-building; reform of the justice and security sectors; poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods; support for civil society; and regional co-operation. Far more effort is expended on the first three goals than on the last three, reflecting the fact

that UNDP is developing a 'niche expertise' in these areas. UNDP has played a pioneering role in developing strategic responses to conflicts and has introduced many trailblazing projects, especially community-based projects.

12. The effectiveness of UNDP is nevertheless constrained by the architecture of international agencies; the international response to conflict continues to be structured around a phased approach, despite the integration of development agencies into the post-conflict response of the United Nations system. Another constraint is the lack of guaranteed core funding for development. 67 per cent of global UNDP expenditures in the 23 conflict-affected countries included in our survey are non-core, and in the case-study countries the proportion of non-core to core was far higher. Partly as a result of this, in the immediate post-conflict period UNDP has tended to undertake gap-filling and administrative functions in order to be of maximum relevance and utility to the international community. In these new types of conflicts, there are often urgent needs that do not fit the mandates of other specialized agencies. UNDP has built a reputation for managing direct budgetary support in the immediate post-conflict period in an efficient and accountable manner, and for meeting needs that might otherwise be left unfilled. Its ability to strengthen relevant institutions beyond this, however, depends to a large extent of the interest of donors and the availability of third party funding.

13. Other weaknesses of UNDP include: lack of systematic analysis of conflict or best practices in conflict areas; insufficient attention to civil society and gender; lack of training for and lack of expertise of staff sent on missions to conflict-affected countries; bureaucracy and delays; difficulty of obtaining information about what UNDP does and about project procedures.

IV. Recommendations

A. A strategic vision

14. In order to strengthen its intellectual leadership, UNDP, in conjunction with other United Nations entities – especially the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) – needs to elaborate a strategic vision based on the concept of human security. The concept of human security provides an umbrella under which the structural conditions leading to conflict can be addressed. It could encompass:

(a) *Human rights – political and civil as well as economic and social.* The physical and material security of individuals is the primary goal of any post-conflict intervention and should receive priority over top-down political concerns. In some places, the view prevails that political stability –meaning deals with former warlords or commanders – takes precedence over political and civil rights, and economic stability – balanced budgets and low inflation – takes precedence over economic and social rights. In contemporary conflicts this is misleading, since stability, in the long term, depends on respect for human rights. The rule of law, political participation, and the livelihoods of individuals – especially jobs and sustainable incomes – are critical for conflict prevention and recovery.

(b) *Legitimate political authority.* In order to create an environment in which human rights are respected, the establishment of legitimate political authority is necessary. The emphasis on legitimacy implies that this is not just a matter of establishing state institutions, but also of building trust and respect for those institutions. The engagement of civil society is just as important as the construction of formal institutions.

(c) *Coherence.* Poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods have to be key components of the overall strategic vision and need to be integrated into strategic planning at all stages of a conflict. Debate and discussion with all partners, including other agencies, government, and civil society, are critical to developing a coherent approach.

(d) *Bottom-up approach.* People who have lived through the conflict are the best guides to the appropriate mix of policy responses. At all stages of peacebuilding, it is important to involve and listen to a range of groups in civil society, at the grass-roots level and among women, as well as politicians and former warlords and commanders.

(f) *Regional focus.* Conflicts spread over borders – and yet programmes are country-based. Far more attention needs to be paid to regional frameworks.

B. Integrate development concerns within United Nations strategies for security

15. Development continues to be seen as an add-on to conflict recovery programmes. Yet development is critical in addressing the structural conditions conducive to conflict. UNDP needs to be able to increase its presence in the Security Council and other political bodies and to take a bolder position in impressing upon these institutions the paramount importance of development concerns. In order to improve the integration of development concerns:

(a) The Administrator of UNDP should brief the Security Council, just as do the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Refugees;

(b) Development assistance should be included in funds earmarked for missions with a Security Council mandate;

(c) UNDP should be involved in the negotiation of peace agreements and should press for the involvement of civil society and women's groups;

(d) Development concerns should have a stronger voice in integrated offices; and

(e) Development should be considered one of the priorities of the new Peacebuilding Commission.

C. Build substantive capacity in core areas of peacebuilding

16. Recent conflicts, including those in our case-study countries, have exposed the need for certain types of activities to address the conditions that lead to conflict and which are not addressed by other agencies. Rather than carrying out these activities in an ad hoc fashion, UNDP needs to develop

substantive capacity in core areas that builds on innovation and the best practice in UNDP programmes and that can be replicated in different situations.

17. The UNDP mandate in these areas places it, potentially, at the very centre of a concerted peacebuilding programme. More specifically, within the framework of its strategic vision, UNDP needs to further develop clear policies and approaches in the following core areas:

(a) *Recovery and reintegration of war-affected populations*, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and mine action; and long-term political reconciliation that extends the political agreements reached at the centre to the local levels, including the equivalent of truth commissions and/or war crimes tribunals;

(b) *Governance and capacity-building*, including strengthening parliamentary institutions, with a particular view to broadening participation and inclusion in decision-making; decentralization, with a view to empowering local communities; strengthening the role of key civil society institutions – not only in the delivery of services, but also as sources of knowledge, watchdogs and independent organizations for advocacy; and public sector reform; accountability and anti-corruption programmes;

(c) *Justice and security sector reform*, including: independence of the judiciary; access to justice; key institutions for guaranteeing human rights; restructuring of the civilian police and military;

(d) *Poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods*, especially community-based development with a view to local empowerment and the creation of employment and sustainable livelihoods through people-centred, area-based programmes and small credit programmes; the development of policies that foster the growth of small enterprises and sustainable livelihoods.

D. Improve the effectiveness of implementation.

18. One of the perceived strengths of UNDP is that some of its procedures are more flexible than those of other actors in the United Nations system, so that it is better able to innovate in response to crises. That edge should be maintained, and in order to further increase operational flexibility, intellectual responsiveness and speed of delivery, UNDP should:

(a) *Develop analytical capacity* to understand specific conflicts and monitor human security. UNDP needs to build capacity among 'think-tanks' and academic institutions in conflict-affected countries so as to obtain a long-term analysis of the conflict and to collect data on human security.

(b) *Enhance human resources* in conflict-affected countries. This should include the development of a clear, effective set of incentives that would attract experienced staff to serve in conflict-affected countries; training programmes in all facets of human security designed to facilitate adaptation to new activities for national and international staff in fragile states or countries affected by conflict; workshops, seminars and other forms of debate about human security policies in specific contexts, to be held both in New York and in-country.

(c) *Undertake a systematic review* of its financial and administrative procedures.

(d) *Emphasize full transparency*, particularly by ensuring the regular updating of its national websites and by posting user-friendly information on projects, budgets, procurement and recruitment to its website on a more systematic basis.

(e) *Improve its outreach* beyond capitals, including through the establishment of field offices with the necessary delegation of authority.

E. Enhance coordination and partnerships

19. Coordination mechanisms should be streamlined and reduced in number, favouring coordination around substantive, clear cut, general strategic frameworks for addressing the structural causes of conflict rather than the management of funds. Subsidiary teams can be established to address contributing themes such as macroeconomic policy and revenue and budget management; the rule of law and access to justice; public administration and civil service reform; gender and the role of women; the construction of essential infrastructure, and other themes.

20. Finally, UNDP needs to further develop certain key strategic partnerships. It has already begun to develop its partnership with DPA and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, as witnessed in the establishment of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and the integrated offices. Likewise, it needs to strengthen its partnership with the World Bank, with a view to mobilizing resources for the generation of jobs and sustainable livelihoods as well as for the revenue base of national institutions. It needs to help build governmental capacity while ensuring that external assistance reaches beneficiaries. And it needs to engage continuously with civil society so as to help shape legitimate institutions.